



14 September 2005



Columbus Day Holiday Weekend Safety

1. Fall is a great time in Europe. USAREUR will recognize the Columbus Day Federal holiday with a 4-day weekend 7 through 10 October. Many of our Soldiers are either deployed or are preparing to deploy during this period. We wish them all continued Godspeed in their service to their Nation. For those who will not be deployed, this period provides an opportunity for Soldiers, civilians, and their families to share some much-deserved time off for rest and relaxation, sightseeing, or simply spending time together.

2. Whatever your plans may be for the long holiday weekend, I ask that you keep safety at the forefront of your actions. This is not the time to let down your guard. The following areas require everyone's attention and are vital to your safety and our composite risk management process:

- **Shorter Days.** As fall begins, the hours of daylight are becoming shorter. It is important to take this into consideration when planning trips and family outings. Now is a good time to conduct a preventive-maintenance check on your privately owned vehicle. Ensure that your vehicle lighting system is in good working order and keep a functional emergency flashlight readily available in the vehicle. Plan to travel during daylight hours to avoid the hazards associated with nighttime driving. Stock up on necessary items for get-togethers or cookouts to avoid last-minute shopping trips after dark.

- **Limited Visibility.** Along with shorter days are the risks associated with limited visibility. Dimly lit and winding secondary roads in Europe make it harder for drivers to see and react to pedestrians and bicycle riders in the road. If you walk or ride your bicycle after dark, be sure to wear appropriate reflective clothing to alert others of your presence and increase the time for drivers to react. Also be sure that your bicycle lights—both front and rear—are in good working order. New laws are being implemented throughout Europe to make reflective clothing mandatory for certain activities. Be smart and take steps now to keep you and your family members safe.

- **Harvest Season.** Fall is one of the busiest times for farming communities throughout Europe. You can expect a greater number of slow-moving farm vehicles operating on public highways at this time. Take this into consideration when planning driving times and—above all—be patient. Anticipate delays. Give farm vehicles the same courtesy you would expect if you were operating a slow-moving military vehicle on a public road. Before attempting to pass any vehicle, ask yourself if it is really necessary. Do not put yourself, your loved ones, or others at risk.

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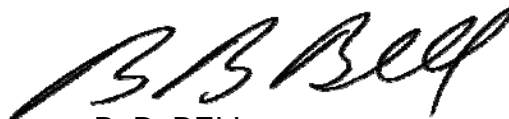
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● **Local Fests.** Participating in local festivals is a distinct part of the European experience. Festivals offer a great opportunity to learn about local customs, sample unique foods, and meet new friends. If you decide to attend a fest and drink alcoholic beverages, you must do this in moderation. Also, you simply cannot operate a motor vehicle if you have been drinking—Don't do it! Do not allow alcohol to affect your judgment or behavior; never forget that you represent our Nation and the Army in Europe. Plan your trip, employ a designated driver, and make sure you have a safe way to get home. Never risk your life or the lives of others by drinking and driving.

3. Soldiers, civilians, and family members are our Army's most valuable resource. I want you to take personal responsibility for your actions over the holiday weekend. I expect our first-line leaders to engage their Soldiers with "Under the Oak Tree Counseling" before they depart for the weekend. Commanders must practice and enforce composite risk management within their organizations. In being safe over the holiday weekend, everyone can return to work both mentally and physically prepared to continue to execute with excellence Any Mission, Anywhere!



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General, US Army
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